

HOW TO WIN SOULS.

J. R. MILLER.

George MacDonald, in one of his books, tells of a child who wished that he were a painter, that he might help God paint his clouds and sunsets. But there is a yet higher co-working with God that is permitted to all his children; they can help him put the beauty of his own image on immortal souls. This is the most enduring work possible in this universe. The touch of beauty you put on a life yesterday, by the earnest word you spoke, by the new impulse you started in the heart of your friend, by the vision of heavenly purity you gave in your own life to one who was with you, will be bright when sun and stars shall have burned out to blackness.

But of all work on human lives, the saving of souls is the noblest. "Let him know," says the Holy Scripture, "that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins. Better than all other knowledge, then, is that which teaches one how to win souls. This is our part. Christ made the redemption, but he gives to us the work of telling men of it. He passes the bread to the hungry multitude through the hands of his disciples. He alone can save souls, but we must seek the lost and bring them to him.

For this sacred ministry we surely must be holy. The grace of Christ may be carried just as well in the heart of a plain fisherman as in that of a learned rabbi; but the vessel must be clean. He who would be a winner of souls must know by experience what it is to repent of sin and put it away at whatever cost. He must have turned his own feet away from evil paths before he can convert others from the error of their ways. Only holy lives can win the unholy to holiness. We must be living gospels ourselves, must be Christ to men, before our words can have any power in drawing them to Christ.

It is said that Francis of Assisi one day stepped down into the cloisters of his monastery and said to a young monk: "Brother, let us go down into the town and preach." So they went forth, the venerable father and the young man, conversing as they went. Along the principal streets, around the lowly alleys, and even to the outskirts of the town, and to the village beyond, they wound their way, at length returning to the monastery gate. Then spoke the young monk: "Father, when shall we begin to preach?" "My son," said Francis, looking down kindly on the young man, "we have been preaching; we were preaching while we were walking. We have been seen, looked at,

our behavior has been remarked; so we have delivered a morning sermon. Ah! my son, continued the saintly man, "it is no use that we walk anywhere to preach, unless we preach as we walk." In this way we must all be preachers if we would win souls. We must preach as we walk.

Then in the matter of teaching we must somehow, first of all, get lost men to know that God loves them. This really is the very heart of the gospel message. It was to reveal this truth to men that the Son of God came to earth. This was the burden of his words wherever he went. It was this blessed revelation that shone out from the cross. And this is what we are to make men know and believe,—that God loves them. It is related of Edward Irving that he went once to see a dying boy. Entering the room, he put his hand on the sufferer's head, and said simply, "My boy, God loves you," and went away. The boy started from his bed, and called out to those about him in the room "God loves me! God loves me!" That one word had been a revelation to him, and it burned and glowed in his heart until it changed him into a new creature, stamping the image of God upon his soul. This is the one message that we should whisper in the ears of those we try to win for Christ. To get them deeply and truly to believe this is to save them.

We cannot win the lost without a genuine love for souls in our own hearts. We can never be a great blessing to those for whom we do not personally care. We may help them in external ways,—providing bread for their hunger, fuel for their fires, clothes to keep them warm, and not really care for them at all; but we can be of little spiritual help to one we do not love. All successful winners of souls have compassionate hearts. No one can read the Gospels thoughtfully, and not be struck with Christ's intense and passionate love for souls. He looked upon the most ruined life with a pity that drew out all his great heart melting tenderness. We read continually that he was moved with compassion as he beheld sin's sad and terrible work in the people about him. He wept with loud wail and outcry over those who obstinately and persistently rejected his mercy and grace.

Some measure of the love that brought Christ from heaven to earth, and inspired in him such care, such compassions for souls, and led him at last to his wonderful sacrifice, we must have, if we would be Christ's messengers in bringing the unsaved to him. Unless we do, it is scarcely worth our while to try to do this sacred work. "God loves you, and I love you," is the burden of the message of Mr. McAll to the masses in Paris, among whom

he has won so many precious gems for Christ's crown. There is little use in telling the people the first part of the message if we cannot tell them also the second part, or at least make them see it in our face and in our true, tireless, tender interest in them. The love of Christ must throb in our own hearts, and shine in our eyes, and speak in our words and very tones, and offer itself again on the cross in our lives, in our efforts to save others, if we would win them for heaven. There must be in our hearts a passion for souls.

When we go to people in a mere perfunctory way, and with unwet eye and emotionless voice tell them of their need and of Christ's love and grace, we fail to move them. But when they see that we truly love them, it is well-nigh impossible for them to resist our persuasion. Said a man with whom another had been pleading: "I am not convinced by what you say. I am not sure that I cannot answer every one of your arguments. But there is one thing which I confess I cannot understand. It puzzles me, and makes me feel a power in what you say. It is why you should care enough for me to take all this trouble, and to labor with me as if you cared for my soul." This illustrates the all but resistless power of efforts on behalf of others when there is in the heart of the seeker a true love for souls.

But love for souls is not the only fire that must burn within the breast. Said Zinzendorf, giving in a word the very secret of all his intense missionary zeal, "I have but one passion, and that is He." Above all love, even for men's souls, must be love for Christ. When Jesus would restore the fallen Peter to his apostleship, he plied him three times with the question "Lovest thou me?" before he gave him the charge, "Feed my sheep. Feed my lambs." Love for Christ is the one great all-inclusive motive that alone will fit one for soul-winning. We must love those we seek to save, but we must love Christ more; we must love them because we love him, because he loves them, because he gave himself for them. We must seek to win them, not for ourselves, but for him. It is not enough to get people to love us and trust us, for we cannot save them. We must get them to love Christ, trust him, and follow him. Thus we must hide ourselves out of sight, not caring to be seen or known as the doer of the work and point all eyes to the Saviour. He who is thinking of getting honor for himself, is not a vessel ready to be used by Christ.

It is said of the great artist Michael Angelo, that, when at work, he wore over his forehead, fastened on his cap, a lighted candle, in order that no shadow of